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German Instruction in Cincinnati.*

While it is true that war has the effect to call out the best qualities of mankind, manly fortitude, unselfish devotion to the common welfare and the recognition of higher ideals than the satisfaction of physical wants, it also has a tendency to develop many qualities that are not commendable, principally unreasonable hatred and a spirit of persecution. It is, however, the mark of a civilized nation to keep these undesirable manifestations in check, and we ardently hope that our nation will not fall short of the high standard that they have always endeavored to maintain in mental poise and sane judgment.

In order to realize this expectation, we must not allow ourselves to be carried away by those who attempt to extend our war with Germany to German teaching in our public schools and who, knowing that the people of Cincinnati would not assent to their aim, if openly avowed, attempt to conceal their hostility under specious arguments.

They say that the teaching of German in our public schools fosters an anti-American spirit, is objectionable on the ground of expensiveness and is a concession to our enemy. All these assertions are refuted by stating the reasons which led to the introduction of German teaching.

It is now seventy-seven years that German is taught in our schools. At that time no German Empire was in existence and no emperor or kaiser. The standing of Germany in the world was entirely based on her achievements in the different branches of learning. The course of study in our schools being limited, at that time, to the three "Rs" the Germans of those days considered such education insufficient and maintained private schools for their children in which German was taught to keep them in touch with the cultural life of their former home. While they ungrudgingly contributed to the support of their schools they did not fail to discover, with the loyal spirit for their new home, that these schools were unsatisfactory in this respect, that they bred a clannish spirit. Their aim was not to make Germans out of their children, but to imbue them with a true and thoro American spirit and they recognized that this could only be accomplished by sending their children to the public schools which,

* Die ursprünglich für die Stellung des deutschen Unterrichts in Cincinnati verfasste Apologie entnehmen wir der Ausgabe des Volksblattes von Cincinnati vom 7. Mai. Da die Ausführungen auch für die Verhältnisse in anderen Städten, in denen der deutsche Sprachunterricht Eingang in den öffentlichen Schulen gefunden hatte, zutreffen, seien sie hiermit zum Abdruck gebracht. D. R.

by contact with the children of American parents, would transform them into full Americans. With this view they petitioned the Legislature about seventy-eight years ago to introduce optional German instruction in the public schools.

This demand was finally granted, but not without serious opposition. Some legislators advanced the opinion, which is even heard to this day, that the duty of public schools was entirely and satisfactorily performed by teaching the three "Rs", all other studies were considered unnecessary. Our reactionaries of today call them fads. The committee that spoke for the Germans had among their members men trained in the science of teaching and explained to the Legislature that German, far from being an unnecessary burden to the pupils, was a most valuable aid to the acquirement of perfect English. Comparison being an important mental discipline, the study of German induces children to compare the German idiom with the English and thus brings them to give more heed to correct English expression. In translating from German into English they are taught to regard the fine shades of meaning, and to aim at correctness of expression. This every educator who deserves the name of such will acknowledge as a correct statement of the principles of teaching, and the experience of our Cincinnati schools has justified these views. While there is a great complaint all over the country that children use English words incorrectly and are crude in their expression, no such defect has been noticed in our schools, or at least not to the same extent as elsewhere. This is owing to their training in German which enables them to penetrate into the true meaning of English words. This has been appreciated by parents who are not of foreign descent, by sending their children to the German classes. If it is alleged that German is only desired by those of that nationality, our statistics prove this to be an error. A considerable percentage of the pupils in the German department are not Germans.

When the petition to teach German had been granted, our public schools at once felt the wholesome influence. New, that is German, methods of teaching quickened the intellect of the children. Teaching that heretofore had been a temporary expedient for making a living became a profession.

The German citizens did not consider their task as completed when their request was granted. They continued their efforts to perfect our school system. It was a German, Dr. Unzicker, who in the Sixties, as a member of the Schoolboard, made penmanship a special branch with the result that good writing became one of the creditable features of our schools. By the persevering demand of Germans educated in the polytechnical institutions of their home country, drawing was added to the curriculum of our schools, and it was owing to the efforts of German

physical culture societies (Turners) that gymnastics are now another commendable feature of our system.

This enumeration of the great benefits that the German language and the German interest in our schools has accomplished, ought to have the item of expense out of consideration, but it is so trifling that it certainly ought not to be a motive for abolishing German instruction. The costs for the elementary schools are stated to be \$79,000 a year, but it is considerably less, if we make allowance for the German teachers who have also classes in singing and drawing, and the assistance that German male teachers lend in maintaining order and discipline, so the costs are considerably less than the small sum stated, and are but a trifle in a budget amounting to millions of dollars. It is negligible if we consider the benefits and more so if we consider the injury that will ensue from banishing German.

If that should occur, our German citizens and particularly those of the intellectual classes will not send their children to schools from which a study is eliminated that promotes the knowledge of English, because good and pure English is almost an obsession with them, and which they deem indispensable to higher intellectual development. This would be a calamity. Our public schools are the melting pot of our country, uniting all the numerous elements of which our population is made up into a harmonious nationality. It would weaken our schools in point of attendance and estrange from them that class of our citizenship that has contributed so largely to raise our schools to their present high standing.

Let those who are swayed by their present hostility remember that the war will end some day and that friendly relations with Germany will again prevail. We were in war with Spain and we did not make war on the Spanish language. The fact is that Spanish has developed into one of the most important studies in our schools. We speak and teach English and have sturdily maintained our independence against England. Finally let us not forget that all that pertains to higher life requires more fostering care when war threatens to destroy all that we have cherished in the sunshine of peace. England has not banished German from her schools, bitter as her feeling is against Germany, and German schools continue to teach English. Let us, too, keep alive the torch of civilization amidst the horrors and desolations of war.